

STATE OF IOWA

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

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Iowa Department of Education Announces Iowa Teacher of the Year

Sioux City fourth grade teacher receives state's top teaching honor

DES MOINES, Iowa – Iowa Department of Education Director Judy Jeffrey announced today the 2009 Iowa Teacher of the Year is Linda Heffner, a fourth grade teacher at Everett Elementary School in Sioux City.

"I congratulate Linda on receiving the state's top teaching honor and applaud all of the finalists who exemplified some of the best educators in the state," Jeffrey said. "Research clearly shows that teachers have the greatest influence in school on student achievement. It is important that we continue to recognize lowa's outstanding teachers who truly put their heart and soul into this incredible profession. The lowa Teacher of the Year honor gives us the opportunity to do just that."

Heffner has taught at Everett Elementary for 24 years. She has a bachelor of science degree in education from Briar Cliff University and a master of arts in administration from Wayne State College. She was a 2006 Women of Excellence Nominee and the 2008 Sioux City Community School District Teacher of the Year.

While she is currently a fourth grade teacher, Heffner has taught first through fifth grades over the years through the school's "looping" approach. Looping is an educational practice in which a single class of children stays with a teacher for two or more years or grade levels.

Heffner noted in her application that many of her students are minority or low-socioeconomic children. "I strive to make students believe in themselves and realize they can achieve anything. I constantly remind them that they can be first in their family to complete college." Her reward is seeing many of her former students go on to college.

In addition to her focus on students, Heffner strives to cultivate parent involvement in school and helps parents become true partners in their children's education.

"Quality teaching goes beyond a mere job of instructing students," Heffner said in describing her beliefs about teaching. "The rewards are not monetary in nature, but in seeing students succeed and develop a love of learning. I share this honor with all of my past and present parents, students, staff and administrators at Everett Elementary. They have helped me become the teacher I am today."

Finalists for the award are:

- Rachel Fliris, a fourth grade teacher at New Hampton Elementary School in the New Hampton Community School District;
- Jodie Irlmeier, a seventh-eighth grade computer teacher at Norwalk-Eastview 8-9 School in the Norwalk Community School District;
- Susan Swift, a seventh-twelfth grade English teacher at Hempstead High School in the Dubuque Community School District; and
- Carol J. Wells, a fourth grade teacher at Libertyville Elementary School in the Fairfield Community School District.

Heffner and the finalists will be recognized at a luncheon, sponsored by Qwest Communications, on October 24 at the University of Northern Iowa. Heffner's tenure as Iowa Teacher of the Year will run from January to December of 2009.

The lowa Teacher of the Year Award was established in 1958 and is sponsored lowa Department of Education through an appropriation from the lowa legislature. For more information on the lowa Teacher of the Year program, please visit the lowa Department of Education website at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/686/664/. The lowa Teacher of the Year may serve as the lowa Ambassador to Education, acting as an education liaison to primary and secondary schools in the state.

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The lowa Department of Education works with the State of Iowa Board of Education to provide oversight, supervision and support for the state education system, which includes public elementary and secondary schools, nonpublic schools that receive state accreditation, area education agencies, community colleges and teacher preparation programs. The department is committed to high levels of learning, achievement and performance for all students, so they will become successful members of their community and the workforce.